IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A link manager comprising:

detecting means for detecting a ~~what~~ link installation ~~is installed~~;

managing means for defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;

link metric rank assigning means for assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

data rank assigning means for assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics; and

selecting means for selecting a link ~~having link metrics complying with a given condition~~ by analyzing each link based on each individual stored metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 2 (Original): The link manager according to Claim 1, wherein

said managing means generates a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 3 (Original): The link manager according to Claim 2, wherein

when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, said managing means generates a record corresponding to said new link and records data corresponding to link metrics of said link and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said managing means deletes said record.

Claim 4 (Canceled).

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The link manager according to claim 1 [[4]], wherein when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned, said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a next highest rank.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): A link management method comprising:

a detecting step of detecting a what link installation is installed;

a managing step of defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;

a step of assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

a step of assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics; and

a selecting step of selecting a link having link metrics complying with a given condition by analyzing each link based on each individual stored metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 7 (Original): The link management method according to Claim 6, which comprises

a step of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 8 (Original): The link management method according to Claim 7, which comprises a step wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claims 9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The link assignment method according to claim 6 [[9]], wherein said selecting step comprises a step of, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with the next highest rank.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A computer program ~~configured to effect execution of the following processes~~ product including a computer storage medium with a computer program code mechanism stored therein, which when executed by a computer causes the computer to perform a method of link management, comprising steps of:

a ~~process of~~ detecting a ~~what~~ link installation ~~is installed~~;

a ~~process of~~ defining a plurality of link metrics indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table;

a process of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective link metrics, for each link on said table;

a ~~process of~~ assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

~~a process of~~ assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective link metrics;

and

~~a process of,~~ when said predetermined preference is given, <u>analyzing each link based</u>

<u>on each individual metric in the ranking order of the respective metrics and</u> selecting a link

corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with

a highest rank.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The <u>computer</u> program <u>product</u> according to Claim

11, which comprises a process of, when there exist a plurality of records having data with the

highest rank thus assigned, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a

highest rank thus assigned, at a link metric with a next highest rank.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The <u>computer</u> program <u>product</u> according to Claim

11 or Claim 12, which comprises a process wherein when a new link corresponding to neither

said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data

corresponding to link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding

to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claim 14 (Canceled).

Claim 15 (New): A link manager comprising:

detecting means for detecting a link installation;

managing means for defining a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link

metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data

5

corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and

selecting means for selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable link metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 16 (New): The link manager according to Claim 15, wherein

said managing means generates a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 17 (New): The link manager according to Claim 16, wherein

when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, said managing means generates a record corresponding to said new link and records data corresponding to constant and variable link metrics of said link and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said managing means deletes said record.

Claim 18 (New): The link manager according to Claim 15, which comprises:

link metric rank assigning means for assigning ranks to said constant and variable link metrics, based on a predetermined preference; and

data rank assigning means for assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said constant and variable link metrics,

wherein when said predetermined preference is given, said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 19 (New): The link manager according to claim15, wherein when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned, said selecting means selects a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a next highest rank.

Claim 20 (New): A link management method comprising:

a detecting step of detecting a link installation;

a managing step of defining a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and

a selecting step of selecting a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 21 (New): The link management method according to Claim 20, which comprises

a step of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table.

Claim 22 (New): The link management method according to Claim 21, which comprises a step wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to constant and

variable link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claims 23 (New): The link management method according to Claim 20, which comprises:

a step of assigning ranks to said constant and variable link metrics, based on a predetermined preference; and

a step of assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said constant and variable link metrics,

wherein said selecting step comprises a step of, when said predetermined preference is given, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 24 (New): The link assignment method according to claim 20, wherein said selecting step comprises a step of, when there exists a plurality of records having data with the highest rank thus assigned, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with the next highest rank.

Claim 25 (New): A computer program product including a computer storage medium with a computer program code mechanism stored therein, which when executed by a computer causes the computer to perform a method of link management, comprising steps of:

detecting a link installation;

defining a plurality of constant link metric and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, and monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time;

8

a process of generating a record comprised of the data corresponding to said

respective constant and variable link metrics, for each link on said table;

assigning ranks to said respective link metrics, based on a predetermined preference;

assigning ranks to the data corresponding to said respective constant and variable link

metrics; and

when said predetermined preference is given, analyzing each link based on each

individual metric in the ranking order of the respective constant and variable metrics and

selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a

constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.

Claim 26 (New): The computer program product according to Claim 25, which

comprises a process of, when there exist a plurality of records having data with the highest

rank thus assigned, selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank

thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a next highest rank.

Claim 27 (New): The computer program product according to Claim 25 or Claim 26,

which comprises a process wherein when a new link corresponding to neither said record is

detected, a record corresponding to said new link is generated and data corresponding to

constant and variable link metrics of said link is recorded and wherein when a link

corresponding to either said record becomes undetectable, said record is deleted.

Claim 28 (New): A computer-readable memory in which the program as set forth in

Claim 11 is recorded.

Claim 29 (New): A link manager comprising:

a detector configured to detect a link installation;

a processor configured to define a plurality of constant link metrics and variable link metrics, each indicating characteristics of each said link detected and managing data corresponding to said respective link metrics on a table, said managing means monitoring the variable link metrics which vary over time; and

a processor configured to select a link by analyzing each link based on each individual stored constant and variable link metric in order of rank, and selecting a link corresponding to a record having data with a highest rank thus assigned, at a constant or variable link metric with a highest rank.